Shelton, and Robert Williams and the format of **ZAP** was set in concrete. Since the comix always evolved out of a specific group of contributors and since most of the issues were organized around a theme [however obscure], it was impossible for an outsider to get in. Even close buddy cartoonists were rejected if their style didn't synchronize with what the others wanted for the overall image of the mag. Outsiders, seeing their first **ZAP** in a midwestern head shop, thought the door was open, so they sent in artwork which was routinely ignored.

While underground comix were never the sixties fad they have been called by writers who ought to know better, they were a product of one of the most unusual periods in American history. Haight-Ashbury was like a carnival that never closed down. Dawn to dark, the street was crowded with people hanging out, getting stoned, staying stoned, tripping, daydreaming, listening to the latest dylan or Beatles album for some spiritual or political insight, dressing up in the images of the past, having a good time, or having a shitty time on bad street drugs and diseased sex. Something was always going on, always happening. Celebrities appeared here and there and they weren't surrounded by bodyguards. The musicians that played at the Fillmore and Avalon hung around on the street and often sang free in Golden Gate Park. You didn't have to go to a faked Woodstock and pay $135 bucks to get in and sweat with the mass. A lot of things were free. The highs and lows of this period are reflected in the early **ZAPS**, in Shelton's **FREAK BROTHERS** strips and Bobby London's **DIRTY DUCK** stuff. It was a great time to be in the Bay Area. I don't idealize it. Someone is always going to say, *what about the people who overdosed and got diseases and got beat up by bike gangs*--well, what about them? There was nothing new about bike gangs and hard drug dealers. They were part of the local scene long before Haight-Ashbury. But the art, theater, music, and general creativity in the atmosphere was at an unprecedented peak in late 1968. It is no accident that the rock posters from this period are valuable collector's items today, nor that the history of comics was changed forever by the success of the alternative companies, most of which located on the West Coast and allowed creators to retain the rights to their work.

By the late seventies, a generation of young people had grown up reading underground comix and out of that group some wanted to draw them. They wanted in. They were tired of getting shitty rejection slips from **ARCADE** and **COMIX BOOK**. They wanted to do it. When I became aware of all this energy out there, I started the *COMIX WORLD MINI-SERIES*, publishing by xerox and offset over 500 little digest-zines and minicomix. Most of the art in my **COMIX WAVE** magazine had made the rounds. This was the stuff that had been rejected by what was to these artists, the underground "establishment." I encouraged everyone to take control of their own lives, not to submit and wait, but to publish their own. To launch the project, I made up a couple of dozen titles like **BABYFAT** and **FRIED BRAINS** and asked various cartoonists on my mailing list if they would submit a panel or two. To stimulate the art, I collected weird news articles and sent xeroxes of

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them along with my requests. If several artists illustrated the same clipping, that was fine: I published them all. I made it a point not to be the editor. Whatever I got went into print and the cartoonist got a few copies to hand out to friends. Many people wanted to do their own titles and I published all of these, too. That was the idea, after all, to stimulate art and help people feel they were a part of something. This mini period lasted about five years and I thoroughly enjoyed it. I loved getting the art in the mail, seeing what new nuttiness cartoonists like Par Holman or David Miller or George Erling or Jim Siergey or Jim Williams had come up with. I was always amazed at how prolific some of the people were. Brad Foster, Jane Oliver, Kevin Eastman, John Howard, Steve Willis, Roldo, and Brad Caslor come to mind.

The minicomix were a great success. Not economically, of course, because they never sold well, but they were a wonderful irritation to both the Eastern and Western Establishments and that was pleasing to a young generation. After about five years, many of the cartoonists began to get into other publications or to expand their own publishing companies and I realized my part was over. A younger generation took charge. I continued to write **COMIX WAVE** for awhile, but less and less material came my way and I was no longer interested in pursuing the subject, writing obituaries, and, ultimately becoming a chronicler of the aging and dying. I stopped advertising and began slowly to lost touch. Many of the cartoonists and animators I had been close to were long dead by then, people like Bob Clampett, Jack Kirby, Roger Brand, and Greg Irons. People I had corresponded with regularly wrote me less and less and I knew most of them had drifted into their own marriages, children, businesses, and divorces; **COMIX WAVE**, as a network of working writers and cartoonists had ceased to exist. One of the reasons my list was down was the Internet. Most of the younger people into comics were listing e-mail addresses and joining discussion groups listed on bulletin boards and hard copy newsletters like mine were obsolete to them. Had I decided to stay in the game, I would have connected my modem and joined in, but my interest had shifted elsewhere.

Xeroxines have continued to proliferate in America and I see them on sale in comic book stores now. There was even a booth at Wonder Con in April of 1995. Dozens of titles I had never heard of. There are probably several thousand titles around now and even while I sit here at the Quad someone has just run off the latest **LUNCH BOX LUST** or **OBSCENE OSCULATION FUNNIES**. The game is still on and it still pleases me to know about it, but I can no longer be a player.

I'm going to suspend **COMIX WAVE** with this issue. I may write other issues at some future time; I'm not closing that option, but for now I have other things on my mind. Those of you who wish may keep in touch with me. I'm keeping the box number and will answer my mail, but there just isn't sufficient comix action these days to justify a regular newsletter.

Collectors who wish may send me a current want list since I may sell some of the things I have before donating my collection to an archive. I don't have any of the really rare undergrounds for sale, so don't anticipate. I have a few copies of the newaves I published and when they are gone, that's it. It's been a good game in many ways and I want to thank those of you who stuck with me to the end. For fellow completists, this is **COMIX WAVE 163**.

--Clay Geerdes, August 5, 1995.

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